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THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION OF 1892.

BY THE HON. JAMES G. BLAINE.

THE lack of excitement and of active interest in the Presidential campaign of 1892 is a feature common to both parties. For a period of more than three months after the nominations were made, the country gave no intimation of any special concern in the result. Possibly this may indicate that henceforth Presidential elections will attract less absorbing attention than heretofore; that as the people grow more numerous they grow less partisan; and that all political elections seem of less moment to a Republic of sixty-five millions, engaged in business transactions of immense magnitude, than to a Republic of twenty millions, whose financial affairs bore not even a proportionate value to those of the Republic of to-day. The elder Harrison's campaign took place in a nation of seventeen millions of people. Every man in the country, nearly every woman, it may almost be said every child, was engaged for months in watching its progress and shaping its result. It would be impossible for the campaign of the younger Harrison to enlist the same degree of popular attention, and it would be a serious interference with the business of the country if it were possible. Vast commercial and financial operations supremely interest so many men that a large proportion of the population give no more attention to an election than simply to vote, and even this patriotic duty is too often neglected.

An equally noticeable change is in the length of the letters of acceptance, and the freedom with which the respective candidates address public meetings and write letters on questions of interest that may arise during the canvass. Mr. Clay's letter accepting the Baltimore nomination, an affair of great moment, was comprised in a few lines, and Mr. Lincoln, who belonged rather to the modern than to the ancient period of the Republic, followed Mr. Clay's example, his whole expression of views being confined to a short paragraph. A strong warning against the writing of intermediate letters was found in the belief that Mr. Clay lost his election by frankly expressing his views on a question pending in the campaign. Mr. Lincoln was too shrewd to write a letter between his acceptance of the nomination and the election. Within the last twenty years, however, all this has changed. Speeches are made and letters are written freely by the Presidential nominees during the canvass, and the people become acquainted with the candidate's belief on every question that arises.

President Harrison has written a letter of acceptance which touches every point at issue. The letter is of unwonted length, but it makes a full exposition of every principle to which the Republican party is in anywise committed, with no attempt to withhold or conceal anything for which the Republican party may be justly held responsible, and with a fair review of the questions presented by the Democratic party. Every voter can read for himself, and decide for himself upon the issues in advocacy of which the Republican party goes before the country. Perhaps none of the President's predecessors have made so exhaustive, and none a more clear, presentation of the questions involved. Marked by his well-known cogency of expression, no further condensation could be made without the sacrifice of clearness.

It will be observed, however, that the President places his own explanation of party principles against the resolutions of the convention—commonly called the platform ; and it is not less observable that the resolutions of a convention have come to signify little in determining the position of President or party. Formerly the platform was of first importance. Diligent attention was given, not only to every position advanced, but to the phrase in which it was expressed. The Presidential candidate was held

closely to the text, and he made no incursions beyond it. Now the position of the candidate, as defined by himself, is of far more weight with the voters, and the letter of acceptance has come to be the legitimate creed of the party. Notoriously, little heed is given to an exposition of principles by the Committee on Resolutions, and less heed is given to resolutions when submitted to the Convention at large. This springs naturally from the fact that great haste characterizes the preparation of the platform, and if one man of the committee has any political hobby that he wishes to incorporate, he has little trouble, from the general inattention of the members, in compassing his end. Conventions often embody issues which are impracticable, and occasionally some that are mischievous and embarrassing.

Whether this mode of a full confession of faith is better than the brief style of earlier Presidential nominees, it is not necessary to determine. Probably it will be decided in each case by the topics on which the candidate desires to communicate his views. If Mr. Lincoln, in his first election, had attempted to be as frank and explicit upon the delicate and dangerous questions then before the public as later Presidential candidates have been, and to add to the platform an exposition of his own, he might have involved himself in inextricable confusion, and have lost his election by the very difficulty of expressing with advantageous brevity the position which the Republican party occupied. His letter of acceptance was short, but it said all that was safe to say :

“SPRINGFIELD, Ill., June 23, 1860.

“SIR : I accept the nomination tendered me by the convention over which you presided, of which I am formally apprised in a letter of yourself and others, acting as a committee of the convention for that purpose. The declaration of principles which accompanies your letter meets my approval, and it shall be my care not to violate it or disregard it in any part. Imploring the assistance of Divine Providence, and with due regard to the views and feelings of all who were represented in the convention, to the rights of all the States and Territories and people of the nation, to the inviolability of the Constitution, and the perpetual union, prosperity, and harmony of all, I am most happy to coöperate for the practical success of the principles declared by the convention.

“Your obliged friend and fellow-citizen,

“Hon. GEORGE ASHMUN.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.”

Ex-President Cleveland's letter of acceptance is not so long as President Harrison's, but it is more distinguished for differing from the platform of his party. It differs not simply in point of

explicitness and detail, but in substance of doctrine. *In fact, Mr. Cleveland has made the platform upon which he is now before the people.* The important issue of the Tariff has undergone some singular changes in the Democratic party in this canvass. A rather long resolution on the tariff, which dealt largely in argument and was mild in its conclusions, was reported by the Committee on Resolutions to the National Democratic Convention. The distinguished chairman of that committee was a member of Mr. Cleveland's Cabinet, and it was presumed that the resolutions contained the views of Mr. Cleveland himself. But no sooner were they reported in convention than they met with decided opposition, and a substitute was adopted of the most radical type, approaching more nearly to Free Trade than any Democratic National Convention had hitherto ventured.

This resolution was evidently received with disfavor by a majority of the country,—by all Republicans and by that numerous class who, though believers in the doctrine of protection, adhere to the Democratic party. Mr. Cleveland, when he met the representatives of his party at a large mass-meeting in Madison Square Garden for the purpose of receiving official notice of his nomination, made a response which showed plainly that the resolution of the Convention did not meet his views at that time. This conclusion he has made more emphatic by his letter of acceptance, an extract from which will be instructive :

“Tariff reform is still our purpose. Though we oppose the theory that tariff laws may be passed having for their object the granting of discriminating and unfair governmental aid to private ventures, we wage no exterminating war against any American interests. We believe a readjustment can be accomplished in accordance with the principles we profess without disaster or demolition. We believe that the advantages of freer raw material should be accorded to our manufacturers, and we contemplate a fair and careful distribution of necessary tariff burdens, rather than the precipitation of free trade.”

“We anticipate with calmness the misrepresentation of our motives and purposes, instigated by a selfishness which seeks to hold in unrelenting grasp its unfair advantages under the present tariff laws. We will rely upon the intelligence of our fellow countrymen to reject the charge that a party comprising a majority of our people is planning the destruction or injury of American interests; and we know they cannot be frightened by the spectre of impossible free trade.”

It seems hardly credible that the gentleman who alarmed the whole country, or at least the Protection part of it, by his message of 1887, could have spoken so moderately on the subject of the

Tariff, five years later. It sounds like an old Whig letter of mild Protection at a time when that party was so hard pressed by the Democracy that to assume advanced ground was to court defeat. It evinces a most gratifying advance in political science. But whether Mr. Cleveland will gain more by this advance of position than he will lose by the charge of political inconsistency sure to attend it, is a problem yet to be solved. Change of front in presence of the enemy is a dangerous movement in political as well as in military tactics. Mr. Cleveland counts certainly upon the continued support of the Free-Trade contingent of New York, and upon the large element of the same mode of thinking which has always existed in the West and Southwest. Neither of these classes, he rightly assumes, can be driven to join the Republicans, who take more decisive ground than Mr. Cleveland. But by his changed position he aims to bring to his hearty support many thousands of voters who are to-day opponents of the Free-Trade platform of his party.

The fact that Mr. Cleveland made such decisive modifications in the Free-Trade resolutions of the Convention is a great tribute on his part to the essential strength and popularity of Protective duties. It has often been said, and Mr. Cleveland apparently confirms it, that three-fourths of the country believe in Protection in some form, and are radically hostile to venturing upon a policy that aims at Free Trade.

In the paragraph relating to the currency, while attempting to make a comprehensive statement, Mr. Cleveland has evidently fallen into error. It may be quoted:

"But whatever may be the form of the people's currency, *national or State*, whether gold, silver or paper, it should be so regulated and guarded by governmental action, or by wise and careful laws, that no one can be deluded as to the certainty and stability of its value."

If in this statement he contemplates the possibility of the currency being of a State issue, how can it be "regulated and guarded by governmental action?" How will that comport with the independence claimed for the States by the Democratic creed? And if it is to be regulated and guarded by governmental action, what need of the State having any participation in the issue of currency? If we repeal the ten per cent. tax, according to the Democratic platform, the States have the right to issue circulating notes immediately, under whatever regulations their legisla-

tures may prescribe. But the language of Mr. Cleveland implies that they are to be prevented the full liberty of issue ; that they are to be restrained by "laws"—"regulated and guarded by governmental action." When the ten per cent. tax was enacted, during the war, to prevent the States from issuing currency, it was held by Secretary Chase, and generally concurred in by public men of both parties, that there was no other way of restraining the States from the power of issue. It will be observed that we do not directly restrain them. We only levy a tax which makes State issues unprofitable. The power to tax is said to be the power to destroy, and we here use it to that very end. If the government possesses the power of "regulating and guarding it by governmental action," the States could have been controlled without levying the ten per cent. tax on circulation. In fact, Mr. Cleveland gives in his adhesion to the repeal clause, and adds a provision designed to take the evil out of it, when it is all the while impossible to make that provision effective. He is self-deceived and, unintentionally no doubt, deceives others.

The truth is that some of the Southern States are bent on issuing currency, and this clause of the Democratic platform was to enable them to do it. If there be any clause entirely mischievous, any one with power to do immense harm and to do no good to the country, it is the one adopted by the Democratic National Convention on the ten per cent. tax. We cannot be mistaken in saying that Mr. Cleveland would have strengthened himself by an absolute negation of his party convention's action. But he has sought to give a gentle assent and to forestall harm by accompanying it with judicious checks which cannot be enforced. The whole mischief lies untouched and unchecked if the tax be but repealed.

A somewhat amusing conclusion of Democratic accusations has happened in the matter of National expenditures. In the first session of the Fifty-first Congress the total expenditures were nearly five hundred millions of dollars, and one is somewhat at a loss to know which cause was the most potent in the elections of that autumn, the "Billion-dollar Congress," or the McKinley tariff. *Five hundred millions of dollars* was a very high sounding sum to harp on for the expenditure of a single year ; but it must be remembered that this nation is immense in area and in population, and that every part of it is making stringent efforts at

progress. Progress means additional national ability and additional national expenditure, and the aggregate amount per year is larger than that of any other nation in the world. While the Democrats were yet blowing at full note their bugle blasts of horror at Republican extravagance, it was suddenly discovered that the first session of the Fifty-second Congress, under Democratic control by a large majority, had expended more than five hundred millions, and had exceeded the appropriations of the Republicans the year before.

The amount we contribute for pensions is larger than the amount paid by any of the European nations for a standing army. Surely the binding up of the wounds of a past war is more merciful and honorable work than preparing the country for a new one. Every year the nation grows more able to pay, and when there shall be no pension roll, the country will be glad to remember that it has expended so vast a sum in payment of an honorable obligation. Great complaint has been made at various times of the amount of money paid from the National Treasury for fraudulent pensions. It cannot be possible that any party in this country wishes to shield fraud, and the gentlemen who complain so loudly should give a guise of proof to their allegations by producing, each in his own community, at least one pensioner whose name is fraudulently on the roll.

The most remarkable thing in the Presidential canvass of 1892 is the manner in which, in some sections of the country, all other issues have been put out of sight and the Force Bill alone brought into prominence. The author of this policy is Mr. Charles A. Dana, of the New York *Sun*, and it is a great tribute to his zeal and ability that such a result should have been achieved. At the beginning of the year the South, in many of the States, gave evidence of such a break in party lines, such hostility to the free-trade sentiments of the Democracy, that there was good ground for believing that its solidity would be broken, and that the Republican party might receive the electoral votes of some States in that section—notably the two Virginias, Tennessee and Alabama. The continued solidification of the South, if such a result can be accomplished, will be primarily the work of Mr. Dana alone. An old Whig, he has certain convictions on the tariff and on the currency that render it difficult, if not impossible, for him to give cordial support to the Democratic party, and he has declined,

with the powerful aid of *The Sun*, to make any other issue than the Force Bill. He found his opportunity for urging this policy, in a resolution passed by the Republican National Convention, in these words :

"We demand that every citizen of the United States shall be allowed to cast one free and unrestricted ballot in all public elections, and that such ballot shall be counted and returned as cast ; that such laws shall be enacted and enforced as will secure to every citizen, be he rich or poor, native or foreign born, white or black, this sovereign right, guaranteed by the Constitution, the free and honest popular ballot, the just and equal protection under the laws as the foundation of our Republican institutions, and the party will never relax its efforts until the integrity of the ballot and the purity of elections shall be fully guaranteed and protected in every State."

It is due to candor, however, that Mr. Dana should state that the President, in his exhaustive letter of acceptance, while not repudiating the principle of honesty and fairness which underlies this resolution, takes different ground from that maintained by the Republican National Convention. It will be observed that President Harrison, after reciting the unfair practices in the South, avers that the Southern States themselves, freely, by their own action, have passed laws against unfair apportionments, and that he looks to the States for the correction of all that is complained of in the matter of elections. He suggests that he shall urge upon Congress that provision be made "for the appointment of a non-partisan commission to consider the subject of apportionments and elections in their relation to the choice of Federal officers." And he offers to urge further upon Congress the passage of a law which will give to the Supreme Court the appointment of the non-partisan Commission. Greater liberality of action, or fairer-minded treatment of a question surrounded with the gravest difficulty, could not be found. Mr. Dana should at least, with his usual impartiality, state the President's position, and should agree that if any State refuses to abide by the judgment of the non-partisan commission appointed by the Supreme Court, it should be taken as an exhibition in that State of a disposition to deal unfairly with this great question.

There is no subject with which the party of Free Trade struggles more desperately than Reciprocity. The unerring instinct of self-preservation seems to inspire a lively resentment against the name, and a truly Darwinian instinct of natural selection appears in the example chosen to prove its inutility. The narrowest

treaty of Reciprocity that was negotiated with any country was with Brazil. It is a country in which time is especially needed to change the lines of commerce. In the end, Brazil will probably show as good results, proportionally, as any other country. But at present it furnishes the least field for Reciprocity ; therefore our Democratic friends, with military uniformity, lead up to Brazil to prove that the Reciprocity policy is a failure ! With the wisdom of the serpent they never summon the Leeward and Windward islands, fifteen in number, Jamaica and Barbadoes, to bear testimony. Our whole dealing with those islands is in agricultural products, and the aggregate is so large that the islands consider themselves, commercially, almost a part of the United States. They take from the outside world as much as they can afford, and for agricultural products nearly every dollar that is expended comes to the United States.

But it is in the island of Cuba that Reciprocity has done the most ; and no footfall of a Democratic campaigner ever disturbs the silence which hangs over Cuba when Reciprocity is under censure. No Democratic objector asks the millers of the country who send flour to Cuba, what have been the results. Statistics in the State Department show that for the first half of 1892 we sent 337,000 barrels of flour to Cuba, making for the whole year 674,000 barrels. During the same period of 1891 we sent only 14,000 barrels, or an average for the year of 28,000 barrels. Considering the small quantity we had previously sent, and that the duty was \$5.75 a barrel, amounting to nearly the value of the flour delivered in Cuba, and operating, except under peculiar conditions, as a prohibition, the sagacity of Democratic silence must be conceded ! A trade of \$4,000,000 in flour, where we had not more than \$175,000, is not a bad showing for the first year of Reciprocity.

For the year ending August 31, our total exports to Cuba were \$19,700,000, and for the same period the preceding year they were \$11,900,000, an increase, it will be observed, of sixty-five per cent. Another year will show still greater gains. This large increase of exports can be made more strikingly significant by a presentation of facts which must convince the most sceptical that it is due entirely to Reciprocity. An examination of Treasury statistics will show that the annual amount of exports from the United States to Cuba during the fifteen years from 1877 to 1891

did not greatly vary ; and the average for the whole period was \$11,700,000 per annum. The exports for 1891 were slightly higher, therefore, than this average. The increase of \$8,000,000 in 1892 represents, therefore, not only a gain of 65 per cent. over the year 1891, but a gain of 67 per cent. over the average annual amount of exports for a period of fifteen years previous. Moreover, of this gain of \$8,000,000, nearly \$4,000,000, as I have before said, were in flour ; and nearly \$2,000,000 more were in bacon, pork, and the various articles which are classed under the head of "provisions." Three-fourths of the increased exports to Cuba were, therefore, the products of the farm. The same is true, in equal or greater ratio, of the increase caused by reciprocal treaties with the islands and countries of America, and particularly by the treaties made with European countries.

The Democratic party earned the name of being bad neighbors, violators of the Neutrality laws and disturbers of the peace, for their several attempts to take Cuba by force. Let me not be supposed to insinuate that the Government, in the hands of the Democratic party, compromised its good faith ; but the attempts upon Cuba, originating in the Southern States, were justly chargeable with being Democratic in origin. Republicans adopt Reciprocity as a more excellent way to capture it. We do Cuba great good by the lower prices at which commodities are furnished to her inhabitants ; we do ourselves great good by the profit on the trade.

It was said by William Pitt, in 1792, that he had reconquered the States by their increased commerce with the mother country ; that within eight years from the treaty of peace the republic had given more commerce to Great Britain, and exchanges were larger and more profitable, than when George III. was the ruler of America. By virtue of the Reciprocity treaty (an advantage which England, under William Pitt, did not have with the United States) we shall conquer by commerce far better than by force of arms, and gradually establish such mutual interests between Cuba and this country that commercially the two countries will be one. Already Cuba sends ninety per cent. of its products to the United States, and the Reciprocity treaty is the first attempt we have seriously or successfully made to equalize the trade by asking Cuba to take from us the larger portion of what she consumes. No Democratic speaker will venture to give these statistics, but un-

less he gives them he cannot give the true history of Reciprocity, which is that we get a valuable consideration for what would otherwise have gone on the free list without recompense or reward to us.

It will be observed, too, that we are attempting to increase our trade, by Reciprocity treaties, in the right direction. For a series of years our trade with the rest of the world has been largely in our favor. But we have annually against us so heavy a sum in Spanish America as to outweigh our balance elsewhere. If we can in any degree lessen that sum we shall save a portion of our gold coin that is retained on the other side of the Atlantic from our large exports, to pay drafts from Spanish America on citizens of the United States, made payable in London. This the Democrats have not seemed to notice, though it has been going on year after year. The Reciprocity policy is the first attempt at a change. Already the treaties negotiated have reduced our adverse West Indian and South and Central American balances to an appreciable extent. If supported and encouraged, Reciprocity will be the means of greatly lessening what has so long been an enormous balance against us in Spanish America.

The first resolution of the Democratic platform states that "the representatives of the Democratic party of the United States, in National Convention assembled, do re-affirm their allegiance to the principles of the party as formulated by Jefferson and exemplified by the long and illustrious line of successors in Democratic leadership, from Madison to Cleveland." Democrats thus seize every occasion to assume that modern Democracy was founded by Jefferson at the beginning of the century, and that all the defeats they have since received are mere interruptions of the century's flow of Jeffersonian principles, which they are especially deputed to uphold. The phantom of Jefferson appears duly in every Democratic National Convention, in every platform adopted, in every response which the candidate makes to his nomination.

It would surprise Jefferson, if he could once more appear in the flesh, to learn that he is held as indorser of all the principles and measures advocated by the Democratic party of to-day. It is perhaps not worth while to enter into any elaborate argument on the subject, but the Democracy owes no little of its success to the persistence with which its adherents have made their dis-

ciples believe this pretension through all the mutations of their party. It was equally true, it must be supposed, when Mr. Buchanan, a confirmed Federalist, was the President-elect of the Democracy ; though it is well known that the object of Mr. Jefferson's most intense dislike was the Federal party. In vain is it pointed out that the position of Jefferson on any subject was directly the reverse of the Democratic position : he is duly quoted at the next convention, and a new oath of allegiance is taken to his principles. In 1801, after a severe contest, Jefferson came to the Presidency as the founder and head of the Republican party. The prefix Democratic was sometimes, though seldom, used. The tenacity with which Jefferson held to the Protective principle was only proportioned to the necessities of the country. His action in 1807, when he declined to recommend the repeal or alteration of the revenue law, after a surplus of fourteen millions had been accumulated, puts him in the sharpest contrast to Mr. Cleveland, who, in his term of office, treated the surplus accumulated as the sum of all villanies.

It is interesting and suggestive to look over the platforms of the two parties and see how much alike they are in several vital measures, after the real and divisive issues have been stated. In parallel columns they read : that the Republicans favor bi-metallism and dollars of equal value ; that the Democrats favor bi-metallism and dollars of equal value ; both parties favor a navy, and both are in favor of building the Nicaragua Canal ; both are opposed to trusts and demand more rigid laws against them; both are in favor of restricting immigration ; both are hostile to Chinese immigration ; both are in favor of public education, and both are hostile to any attempt at union of Church and State ; both are in favor of making Congressional provision for the World's Fair ; both are in favor of civil service reform ; both are in favor of admitting the territories at the earliest possible moment ; both sympathize with the Russian Jews ; both are in favor of granting pensions ; both are in favor of river and harbor improvements ; both would avoid entangling alliances in our foreign policy. Out of this long platform the measures on which the parties really differ are the Tariff, Reciprocity, the tax on State banks and the Force Bill, if the Force Bill can be regarded as a party issue when so large a number of the Republican party do not favor it.

If parties would aim to discover and define those subjects on

which there is a vital difference of opinion, and would confine discussion to those issues, it would not only simplify the contest and be a welcome relief to the candidates, but would also greatly help in arriving at the truth, which is the ultimate object of popular discussion and popular election.

JAMES G. BLAINE.